



5

God Uses Gideon

Key Theme

- God uses people to accomplish His perfect plans.

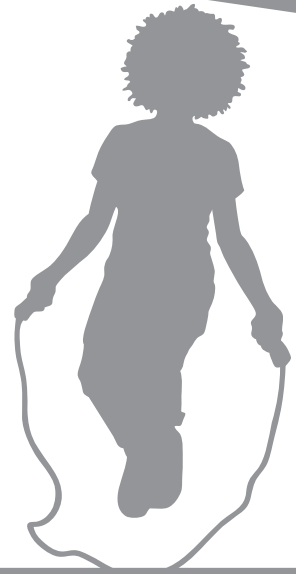
Key Passages

- Judges 6:11–16, 7:2–7, 7:16–21; 1 Corinthians 15:9–10

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe God's sovereignty in choosing Gideon as a leader.
- Recognize God's role in defeating the Midianites—a nation that wanted to destroy Israel.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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Students will place bookmarks at Judges 6, Judges 7, and 1 Corinthians 15. Students will practice the memory verse using the Memory Verse Strips.



Activity 1: God Uses Gideon Class Notes

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Students will fill out God Uses Gideon Class Notes as you study the lesson. Pass out the class notes before you begin to teach.



Studying God's Word

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God used Gideon to lead a small army to defeat the Midianites. The Midianites were a nearby nation that attacked Israel and Gideon. Gideon was not mighty, but the Lord worked mightily through him to accomplish His purpose.



Activity 2: Trumpet, Pitcher, Torch Game

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Students will review the lesson by playing a game that matches statements that relate to the account of Gideon and to the characters that said them.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- ☐ Cut paper into strips for each student to mark today's study passages in Judges 6, Judges 7, and I Corinthians 15.
- ☐ If you haven't done this, print and cut out the Memory Verse Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM for every 2–3 students. Print on cardstock if possible.

- ☐ Memory Verse Poster
- ☐ Paper strips
- ☐ Memory Verse Strips in envelopes or small plastic bags
- ☐ If you want to do this as an individual activity, make one set per student



GOD USES GIDEON CLASS NOTES

- ☐ Print one God Uses Gideon Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- ☐ God Uses Gideon Class Notes for each student
- ☐ God Uses Gideon Class Notes Answer Key
- ☐ Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- ☐ Study the Prepare to Share section.
- ☐ Go Before the Throne.
- ☐ Print one Lesson Board Work Outline.
- ☐ Print and cut out the seven Board Work Mini-Posters from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use.

- ☐ Student Take Home Sheets
- ☐ Lesson Board Work Outline
- ☐ Seven Board Work Mini-Posters



TRUMPET, PITCHER, TORCH GAME

- ☐ Print and cut out the Trumpet, Pitcher, Torch Game Point Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM. Put them in a cup, bowl, or other container.
- ☐ Print and cut apart the Character Questions from the Resource DVD-ROM. Fold them and put into a cup, bowl, or other container.
- ☐ Print one Character Questions Answer Key from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use.

- ☐ Trumpet, Pitcher, Torch Game Point Cards in an appropriate container
- ☐ Character Questions in an appropriate container
- ☐ Character Questions Answer Key



Memory Verse

Joshua 1: 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

➤ **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

As you begin to prepare for your lesson this week, please prepare your heart and mind by reading Judges 6–8.

The recurring cycle of Israel's history during the time of the Judges continued for the 300-year period. This cycle included the Israelites' disobedience and idolatry, God's judgment on them through neighboring nations, their cry to God that He would deliver them, God's mercy and compassion in raising up judges to deliver them, and finally Israel's fall back into disobedience. In Judges 6 we find that because the Israelites were once again doing evil in the sight of the Lord, God allowed them to be oppressed by the Midianites. They were now crying out to Him for help (Judges 6:6). The Lord was to provide an unlikely hero for them through Gideon.

The Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon—who was threshing wheat in secret so that the raiding Midianites would not take it (not a very valiant act)—and called Gideon a “mighty man of valor.” He told Gideon that he would lead Israel to defeat its current oppressors, the Midianites. Gideon revealed his fear and lack of trust in the Lord as he responded that he was weak and of the weakest clan of Israel (Judges 6:15). But the Lord responded with confidence, explaining that He Himself would be with him. In Judges 6:14, the Lord told Gideon to “Go in this might of yours,” but God also clearly told him the source of that might: “Have I not sent you?” And in verse 34, as Gideon gathered men for battle, it was because “the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon.” Scripture is clear that it was the Lord moving in these events, using Gideon; it was not Gideon's own strength or ability that won the victory. We see, as the account unfolds, that God wanted His power alone to be demonstrated.

In Judges 7, a substantial number of men had rallied to Gideon (though they would still have been outnumbered by the Midianites). In Judges 7:2–8, God gave Gideon orders to reduce the number of men who would participate in the battle. First, any who were fearful were commanded to leave. Next, God directed Gideon to accept only those who drank by lapping the water from their hands. Thus, the fighting force was reduced to a mere three hundred to face the Midianite army of 135,000. God wanted the victory of this battle to point to Him alone as deliverer. He did not want the Israelites to think for a minute that this

victory was theirs. “And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, “My own hand has saved me”’” (Judges 7:2).

The account of the battle is dramatic and noble. Gideon's three hundred men stealthily approached the Midianites with covered lamps. Then suddenly, at Gideon's signal, they broke the jars that covered them and shouted, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon,” inciting panic among the Midianites (Judges 7:20–21). In the midst of this panic, God ordained that the Midianites would turn their swords on each other—this was God's battle, and the victory was accomplished by His power, working through Gideon's obedience (Judges 7:22).

God used Gideon, a simple man, to accomplish a great victory against a fearful opponent. Gideon was obedient and proved to be strong, due to the Lord's strength in him. Gideon was the fifth and one of the greatest judges of Israel. Because of his faith in the Lord, he is mentioned with the great and faithful saints listed in Hebrews 11:32.

As stated before, the victory for this battle was the Lord's. It could only have been the Lord who would allow 300 men to defeat the Midianite army. Gideon realized this. The people were quick to forget as evidenced when they requested that Gideon rule over them (Judges 8:22). Gideon's loyalty to God shone bright as he turned down this honor and reminded the people of God's sovereignty in His rule over them (Judges 8:23).

Sadly, Gideon compromised his faith by requesting and accepting offerings of gold, plundered by Israel from their enemies, and he used the gold to make an ephod (a kind of ceremonial breastplate). This ephod, set up in Gideon's city of Ophrah, became a snare to Gideon and to his family (Judges 8:27).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Gideon acted faithfully and courageously in battle, but God desires to be the object of His people's worship and gratitude, and He will not share that worship: “My glory I will not give to another” (Isaiah 42:8). God used people all through history and continues to use people today to accomplish His will. But He makes it clear that even when He does so, it is He who always ultimately deserves the credit: “it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure”

(Philippians 2:13). Both the desire and the ability to obey God are the results of God working in us.

In Judges 8, we find that the men of Ephraim wanted to share the credit that belonged to God for the battle won. We then find that the men of Succoth and Peniel would not credit God (or anyone) without proof of a certain outcome. And finally, we see that Israel, rather than giving credit to God for using Gideon, gave Gideon credit instead of God. This inclination to overlook and disbelieve that it actually was God who orchestrated the victory was at the root of Israel's tendency to fall back into sin, even after a deliverance such as this. God uses His people to accomplish His perfect plans. But when the plans are accomplished, we must not forget that we are His workmanship created to do the good works He has prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). To Him be the glory forever (Romans 11:36).

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Awesome God, you encourage me. I delight in your Word and am amazed at how you use simple and foolish people to accomplish your purposes. Even though Gideon was close to despair as he focused on the Midianites, you came to him and gave him hope and victory. Lord, help me to walk by faith in you and not to despair when my circumstances overwhelm me. Help me to model that kind of faith walk to my students. Cement your Word in our minds that we might not sin against you, and that we might be light and life to the dark world around us.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will mark their Bibles at Judges 6, Judges 7, and I Corinthians 15 with strips of paper.
- They will put the Memory Verse Strips in order and recite the verse together and/or to each other. They may work individually or in teams.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided a template on the Resource DVD-ROM you can use to make Memory Verse Strips to be put in order each week. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



God Uses Gideon Class Notes

MATERIALS

- ☐ God Uses Gideon Class Notes for each student
- ☐ God Uses Gideon Class Notes Answer Key
- ☐ Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will be filling in these class notes as we study the Bible today. Try not to work ahead. Fill in the blanks as we come to

them. I'll let you know when to fill in something.

After filling in each point on the class notes, have the students re-read the statement together or call on individual students to read it.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will see some important things about how our Almighty God uses people to accomplish His purposes.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

➤ Use the History of Israel Poster included with your teacher kit to show your class where the biblical accounts you study chronologically fit into this timeline.

Judges 2:16

➤ Place the mini-posters—Israel's Cycle in Judges—on the board as shown on the Lesson Board Work Outline as you explain the cycle of Israel's sinfulness and God's deliverance. The students will fill in their class notes as you proceed.

Judges 6:11–16

The people of God were in the Promised Land. After Joshua died, they turned from God in disobedience and idolatry. They entered a dark time in their history when they would not remain loyal to God. God punished their disobedience by bringing other nations in to rob, plunder, and destroy them.

But God still showed them mercy. Listen as I read one verse. *Read Judges 2:16.*

The people cried out for God's mercy and He sent them judges. The judges would save the people out of the hand of their enemies.

As we read the book of Judges, we see how God remained patient for 300 years as the people repeated the cycle of sin over and over. The cycle went like this.

The Israelites sinned against God by disobeying Him and worshipping idols. *Put mini-posters 1 and 2 on the board. Have students fill in the word "sinned" on their class notes.* Then God became angry and punished them by bringing an enemy to defeat them. *Put mini-poster 3 on the board. Have students fill in the word "enemies" on their class notes.* So the Israelites cried out to God to forgive them. *Put mini-poster 4 on the board. Have students fill in the word "God" on their class notes.* Then God raised up a judge to deliver them. *Put mini-poster 5 on the board. Have students fill in the word "judge" on their class notes.* And the Israelites praised God for His deliverance and the peace they had. *Put mini-poster 6 on the board. Have students fill in the word "praised" on their class notes.* But soon the Israelites fell back into idolatry and sin. *Refer to mini-poster 2.* This cycle continued for 300 years! Complete #1 on the class notes. *Have students fill in the number "300" on their class notes.*

During that time, God faithfully raised up many judges for them in spite of their sinfulness and disobedience. Today we will hear about one of the judges, Gideon. God sovereignly chose Gideon and then worked through him to conquer the Midianites, a nearby nation that came against Israel.

Now let's read Judges 6:11–16 together. Israel was under attack by the nearby nation of Midian when this occurred. *Choose students to read aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Very good. Now let's observe what God is saying to us in this passage by asking some questions.

Observe the Text

? Start by looking at Judges 6:11. Who came to Gideon? *The Angel of the Lord.*

- ? What was Gideon doing at that moment? *Judges 6:11. Threshing wheat.*
 - ? Yes. And in Judges 6:12, what did the Angel of the Lord say to Gideon? *The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor.*
 - ? Then what did Gideon ask the Angel of the Lord, according to Judges 6:13? *Why has this happened to us? Where are the miracles of God?*
- That's right. Look at the end of Judges 6:13. Gideon felt that the Lord had forsaken or forgotten them because of their enemies the Midianites.
- ? Yet in Judges 6:14, what did God tell Gideon to do? *Go and save Israel.*
 - ? Yes! And who was sending Gideon? *The Lord.*
 - ? How did Gideon react? What did he think of this idea? *Judges 6:15. Allow discussion. He wondered how he could save Israel. He was from the weakest clan, Manasseh. And he was the weakest in his home.*

Gideon couldn't believe God was sending him! Someone read Judges 6:16 for me again. *Assign a reader.*

- ? What did the Lord assure Gideon? *He would be with Gideon. Gideon would defeat the Midianites.*

Discover the Truth

- ? Look at #2 on your class notes. Who had God sovereignly chosen for this task? *Gideon. Have students complete #1 on their class notes.*
- ? Do you remember what sovereign means? *Refer to the Attributes of God Poster. Have someone read the definition.*

Yes! The Lord is in complete control of everything; He does all that He pleases. In His sovereignty, God chose to use Gideon. Gideon was NOT mighty. In fact, he was close to despair because of the Midianites. The Midianite attack had shaken Gideon's trust in God. But the Lord promised to go with Gideon and God led him to victory. The victory would belong to the Lord, not to Gideon.

- ? How should you fill in #3, #4, and #5 on the class notes? *Allow discussion. Answers should be #3) complete and all; #4) No; #5) The Lord.*



SOVEREIGN
(Refer to Attributes Poster)

READ THE WORD

Let's keep reading to find out more about how the Lord used Gideon. Turn to Judges 7:2–7. An army of 32,000 Israelites had gathered to follow Gideon into battle against the Midianites! But the Lord had a different army in mind. Follow along as I read. The army of 32,000 soldiers ended up being much smaller. *Read the verses aloud.*

Judges 7:2–7

EXAMINE THE WORD

How interesting! Let's ask some questions about this passage and see what God is saying to us through it.

Observe the Text

Gideon and his army were ready to obey God. But God stopped them. He had more instructions for Gideon. God made the army much smaller!

- ? Look at Judges 7:2. Why did God want to make Gideon's army so small?
Allow discussion.

Yes. God said to Gideon that his army was too large. If Gideon were to win the battle with such a large army, the people would boast that they had won the battle. God did not want them to think they were the heroes.

- ? God wanted the credit for the victory. So, who did God tell to go back?
Judges 7:3. Whoever was afraid could leave.

- ? And how many men went back? *Judges 7:3. 22,000.*

- ? If there were 32,000 men to start with, and 22,000 were afraid and left, how big was the army Gideon was left with? *10,000 men.*

- ? So, what would the answer to #5 be on your class notes? Why did God want to reduce the size of the army? *So He would have credit for the victory! Have students complete #6 on their class notes.*

Yes! 22,000 men had already left. But apparently the army was still too large. God told Gideon to take them to the river. God was going to reduce the number of men even more. He had a very different plan. He was going to test the people and send even more of Gideon's army home. Listen as I read. *Read Judges 7:4–6 again.*

- ? How was God going to divide the people? It had to do with drinking water. Where did God tell Gideon to bring the army? *Judges 7:4. Down to the water.*

The test had something to do with how the men would drink the water. Those who drank the water from their hands and lapped it up like a dog would be the men chosen to go with Gideon into battle. Someone read Judges 7:6–7 for me again. *Assign a reader.*

- ? How many men put their hands to their mouths and lapped water like a dog? *300.*
- ? And what did the Lord tell Gideon about these 300 men? *Judges 7:7. By these 300 men, I will deliver the Midianites to you.*

God had taken Gideon's army of 32,000 and made it an army of 300! The Lord would use only 300 men to defeat the Midianites. With such a small army, the Israelites would know the victory wasn't because of anything they did. The victory would be the Lord's!

Now, I'm going to read Judges 7:16–21. We'll see how the battle of 300 men against the large Midianite army went. Follow along as I read. *Read verses.*

Judges 7:16–21

- ? So, again, how many men does it say were left? *Judges 7:16. 300.*
- ? And what three things were they going to use for the battle? *Judges 7:16. Trumpets, empty pitchers, and torches.*
- ? What odd weapons! Go to #6 on your class notes. Circle the weapons the 300 men were to use for this unusual battle! *Have students circle the weapons—trumpets, pitchers, and torches—on #7 of the class notes.*
- ? Who remembers what the people were instructed to shout when the trumpets blew? *Judges 7:18. "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"*
- ? And in Judges 7:20, what did they do on the day of battle? *They blew the trumpets, broke the pitchers, and cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."*
- ? Incredible! Then what happened to the Midianite army? *Judges 7:21. They ran and cried out and fled.*

Discover the Truth

Wow! God wanted the glory for this victory, and He would get it! What a way to win a war. First reduce the number of people. Then arm yourselves with pitchers, torches, and trumpets! The Israelites under Gideon's leadership obeyed God. And God was faithful to them. The Midianites ran in confusion and in their confusion began to kill one another! Only God could have worked that out. Only God could get the glory for this victory.





Trumpet, Pitcher, Torch Game

MATERIALS

- ☐ Game Point Cards in a container
- ☐ Character Questions in a container
- ☐ Character Questions Answer Key

INSTRUCTIONS

On the board write: "Gideon," "The Lord," and "One of Gideon's 300."

Divide the class into two or three teams. Have the first playing team draw a card from the Trumpet, Pitcher, Torch Game Point Cards and then draw one of the Character Question Strips. Read the question aloud. The playing team must answer using one of the three names on the board (Gideon, The Lord, or One of Gideon's 300). Have the team answer the questions quickly—in a matter of seconds to make the play more exciting and challenging. Continue play until all questions have been answered or time is up.

If the playing team answers correctly, award the number of points drawn. List points on the board or have the team start a collection of point cards and add them together at the end.

If a team answers incorrectly, let the next team answer or put the question back in the drawing cup to be used again.

Let's see if you were paying attention to what happened to Gideon. Each team will pick a point and a question. Read the question and answer it. Answer will be Gideon, the Lord, or one of Gideon's 300 men. Your team must decide who you think the statement comes from. The team that gets the highest points wins.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

The Lord used Gideon even though he was not mighty. Gideon had an obedient spirit and trusted God to lead his army to victory. I hope the Lord will be able to accomplish His plans through you as you humble yourself in obedience to Him like Gideon did.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Today we heard that God chose Gideon. Gideon was threshing wheat, minding his own business, and he heard God's call. Gideon was not a mighty man. He wondered how he could save Israel. He was from the weakest clan, Manasseh. And he was the weakest in his home. Yet God chose Gideon who was afraid and in despair because of the Midianites. God knew what He wanted. He wanted Gideon to lead the army and He wanted the victory to belong to Him alone. God sovereignly chose Gideon.

And the victory was one only God could have achieved. Remember, Gideon's army started with 32,000 men. But God reduced it to only 300 men. And remember the strange weapons God wanted them to use—trumpets, empty pitchers, and torches? The victory was clearly the Lord's

alone. There was no way this group of men armed with trumpets, empty pitchers, and torches could have won the battle. God won the battle and God got the glory.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

God loves using His people to accomplish His purposes. And He did just that! Gideon was the least likely to be chosen to lead the Israelites against the powerful Midianites. The New Testament tells us about another man God used to accomplish great things. I'm talking about the Apostle Paul. Paul was used by God to write much of the Bible. And after Jesus died, Paul gave his life to preach the truth about Jesus. He started many different churches all over the area.

Listen as I read these two verses from Paul. Listen to what he says about himself. *Read 1 Corinthians 15:9–10.*

1 Corinthians 15:9–10

- ? What did Paul say about himself? *Re-read verse 9 if the students need a reminder. I am the least of the apostles. I am not worthy.*
- ? Why did Paul think of himself as the least? *He had persecuted the church.*
- ? What does “persecuted” mean? *Allow Discussion.*

He was persecuting Christians—people who loved Jesus. He had the power to put Christians in jail, arrest them, take them from their families, and hurt them—and he was doing it. He hated the Christians. And this is the man whom God called to do His work and accomplish His purposes.

- ? Now Paul knew he wasn't worthy. Yet God gave Paul something—something that helped him to accomplish God's purpose. What was it that gave Paul the strength to do the Lord's work? *Re-read verse 10 if the students need a reminder. The grace of God.*

Gideon was weak and afraid. Paul had persecuted God's people and considered himself unworthy to serve the holy God. Yet God chose both of these men in His sovereignty to serve His purposes.

They were obedient to God, and God used them to accomplish His purposes. It was God's power that allowed Gideon to win that battle in such a strange way. And it was God's power through grace, not Paul's might, that gave Paul the strength to persevere in preaching the truth about Jesus.

God alone, through His grace, accomplishes His plan. Yet, He does use people. He used Gideon. He used Paul. He will use you if you are obedient to Him. And what a privilege to be used by Him! Finish your class notes—#8 and #9. *Have students fill in “obedient” in #8 and their names in #9 of their class notes.*



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God because He is sovereign and we can trust Him.
- Thank God because He gave us this class to learn about Him.
- Ask God to help us live in obedience to God's Word and be used by God.